

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this Application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

This Amendment is in response to the Office Action mailed on December 1, 2003. Claims 1-21 are pending in the Application, Claims 1-3, 8-11, 14-16, and 18-21 stand rejected and Claims 4-7, 12, 13, and 17 stand objected to. Claims 1-21 are allowed over the prior art of record. The indication of allowable subject matter is noted with appreciation. Claims 1, 4-8, 11-18, 20, and 21 are amended by the present amendment.

Claims 4-7, and 12-13 are objected to under 37 C.F.R. §1.75(c) for being in improper multiple dependent form. Applicants have amended the dependency of Claims 4-7, and 12-13 and herein respectfully request reconsideration of the objections of those claims under 37 C.F.R. §1.75(c).

Applicants have herein submitted an amended abstract for compliance with standard U.S. practice. Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments to Claims 1, 4-8, 11-18, 20, and 21 are being submitted only to overcome the above-noted objection under 37 C.F.R. §1.75 and for the removal of numerical indicia from the claim language in compliance with standard U.S. practice. Applicants respectfully submit that no new matter has been introduced by the present amendment to the claims and to the abstract of Applicants' disclosure.

Application No. 09/926,344
Reply to Office Action of December 1, 2003

Based on the fact that Claims 1-21 have been allowed and the present amendment only corrects minor informalities, Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance and respectfully solicit an early Notice of Allowability.

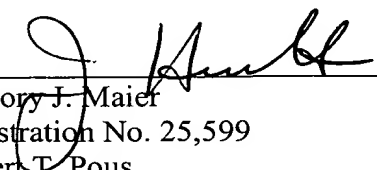
Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C.

Customer Number

22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 08/03)
I:\ATTY\MQM\21's\215066US\AM.doc



Gregory J. Maier
Registration No. 25,599
Robert T. Pous
Registration No. 29,099
Attorneys of Record

James D. Hamilton
Registration No. 28,421